

Our heritage

Publishing the news...at Seibert!

The Seibert Settler

"The Voice of the Plains"

VOLUME 30

SEIBERT, COLORADO, FRIDAY, JUNE 7, 1935

NUMBER 13

Three Perish as 11-Inch Rain Breaks Century Record

"Service" Means Much to Everyone Following Catastrophe Last Weekend

Just how much the word "service" can mean was accentuated following the disaster. Every possible service was rendered those marooned in the flood. The "milk of human kindness" flowed freely. Especially commendable was the efforts of those whose duties affect the public, to render service in the face of tremendous difficulties.

Working day and night, Charles Walker, in charge of state highway equipment, inspection and maintenance in this sector, maintained a semblance of order in his department throughout. By early Saturday he had established highway communication west and that evening trucks were able to come through. Monday morning he was able to permit the huge fleet of gasoline and merchandise trucks that had gathered here at the road-end to proceed. With three Coleman trucks and two caterpillars he and his crew were able to pull even the heaviest vehicles over the bad spots. Mr. Walker does not venture a guess as to the probable time when the highway will be repaired but the best guess seems to be three to five weeks. The old highway will be put to use pending repair of the new when it will likely be about August 1.

W. H. HESS, JR. has been working what amounted to a 24-hour shift, made possible communication with the outside world. The wire crew of the Rock Island had damage repaired within seven hours after the flood subsided.

Telephone communication was possible to most points by Friday morning at 8 to Flagler, via a long route through Kansas and to Denver by 2 p. m. Saturday. Working hours meant nothing to Mrs. Helen Hassmann and her assistants in their effort to make it possible for persons to communicate with their anxious relatives and friends on "the outside" as well as business messages. This was especially valuable as mail communication was entirely cut off.

Saturday evening the Newton

Wolkamp's undershirt

One of Seibert's country's most popular young couples were married in Goodland June 4. Irene Wolkamp and Joe Zimmers, both of the South ranch east of Seibert where they will farm on a 100-acre tract.

The bride is an aptly named young man who came to Colorado three years ago from Broken Bow, Neb., where he was a high school graduate.

Mr. and Mrs. Frank Perrine, teachers of the family and attending business office in Denver, where she will finish. She was a valedictorian of the 1934 class of Seibert high school and one of our most talented young ladies. Before is the eldest son of Ellis Murphy of the LaSalle county and formerly of Rock Creek vicinity and a very good farmer though now employed on a road construction job. The settler joins the community in wishing these fine young people happiness.

Joe Paul Zimmers' father and his sister Ida, have also been recently married. The bride and groom will join the community in Seibert these young folk a noted happiness.

DISTRICT ROADS NEED MONTHS FOR NECESSARY REPAIRS

The flood damage resulting from the storm, in this community's district alone is almost incomprehensible. The state highway department is at work on the bridge at the mouth of the river, but traffic can pass. The damage to the bridge is not so serious as it appears. The bridge is not so badly damaged as it appears. The bridge is not so badly damaged as it appears.

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Farmers' Homes, Land, Machinery, Cattle Destroyed Communication Severed

THE CASUALTIES:

Clarence L. Lethian, age 60

Wayne Genser, age 27

Mrs. Wayne Genser, age 27

Terrific storm descended on the plains Thursday night at 8:10 and death rode with the tempest. Trapped by a wall of water in their Sand Creek farm home, one and one-half miles from Seibert, Clarence L. Lethian, 60, Wayne Genser, twenty-seven, and Mrs. Genser, twenty-seven, were swept away. Sunday night, following unending search, the body of Genser was found, stranded on a sand drift in midstream, 35 miles east of Seibert by stream.

By Sunday, good fortune, Mrs. Lethian had left only the day before for a visit at Vernon, Kans. When apprised of the tragedy, she left at once for Seibert, but, flooded streets and washed-out highways prevented her reaching here until Tuesday.

The body of Wayne Genser was found fully clothed and with his hands and feet bound together in the sand. A cash on the forehead might have been inflicted before death.

The Ford car owned by Genser, was found a short distance down stream. A strand of barbed wire, evidently hastily twisted around its front axle might indicate that the car had been anchored to the house in the belief that the latter would withstand the flood.

The deluge, varying from 8 to 11 inches, which fell within four hours caused damage in this county estimated at \$250,000.00 to buildings, growing crops, fences, livestock, railroad and highway bridges and fills, machinery and automobiles, while the damage to farm land is incalculable. The valleys of the Republican, Smoky and every tributary are devastated. To name those who suffered loss along the river would be to catalog every dwelling in the lowlands.

Beginning on the headwaters of the streams, dams, bridges and fills went out in succession, each breaking increasing the volume and fury of the onrushing wall of water. Sand Creek, ordinarily a dry valley, was swollen to a raging river 100 feet wide and as much as 14 feet deep in the channel. The new highway bridge and fill, the old highway bridge, the railroad bridge over the creek and the Republican, were swept away, in some cases even the massive concrete abutments being taken. Every vestige of topsoil of the valley farms was washed away. Productive fields were buried under sand that varies in depth from two to eight feet. New channels innumerable were cut. The creek bed is dotted with parts of buildings, machinery and the bodies of dead animals.

Thursday's storm and flood was the worst and only one of its kind in the memory of any resident. James H. McCombe, who has known this territory intimately for the past 40 years, states that nothing even approaches the magnitude of the flood he has seen. He says that the water in Sand Creek must have been at least several feet higher than any previous recorded mark.

As soon as communication is opened, the reporter of the state newspaper will be contacted in an effort to ascertain the exact character of the disaster. There is little hope of locating the rest of the skeleton, as it may have been scattered over a wide area of sea bed.

Burl Miller Dies of Accident Hurts

Run over Monday morning by a tractor on his farm which was being run by his brother, Burl Miller died shortly after arriving in Denver where he was sent for medical aid. The funeral was held at the Rock Island church Thursday morning. Just how the accident occurred is unknown for Burl Miller did not know his brother was around until he saw him lying under the wheels of the tractor. He was rushed to Flagler where Dr. Neff gave him medical care and ordered him shipped to Denver.

The call of Mr. Miller's leg was badly crushed by a tractor tire and his entire right side, bruised and battered by the wheel. His death is thought to have been caused by the concussion of the brain and skull fracture.

N. A. Cloutier is here from Burlington, acting as relief operator at the Rock Island depot.

Telephone communication was possible to most points by Friday morning at 8 to Flagler, via a long route through Kansas and to Denver by 2 p. m. Saturday. Working hours meant nothing to Mrs. Helen Hassmann and her assistants in their effort to make it possible for persons to communicate with their anxious relatives and friends on "the outside" as well as business messages. This was especially valuable as mail communication was entirely cut off.

Saturday evening the Newton

PLEA FOR MAIL GETS VERY PROMPT RESULTS

When the mail was cut off by the flood, a plea for mail was sent to the National Directory Co. It read:

"Answering your wire. Temporary service authorized Colorado offices to Stratton."

"MURRAY."

"Chief mail clerk."

Mail arrived by special truck in charge of a special deputy from Lincoln shortly after noon Wednesday. He went through to Hutchinson and brought more mail on his return.

Seibert is appreciative of the quick action taken by Mr. Murray on receipt of the telegram.

Postmaster Zella Hutchins informs the Settler that from 9 Tuesday evening until 10 Wednesday morning there was eleven mail deliveries although none official.

Mr. and Mrs. Charles Hosen are oblivious to anything but joy, the occasion being the arrival Monday at 11 of an eight-month-old. The young man has been named Charles H. Jr. The father is one of the county's best young farmers, on his place northeast of Seibert. Both he and the mother, formerly Della Hosen, are graduates of the Seibert high school.

Flood Unearths Mammoth Bones

The flood, worst in at least fifty years, has unearthed a mammoth skeleton, thought to be a relic of the time when this country lay thousands of feet below the sea. A leg bone of a huge mammal was found in the river north of the Plains. W. J. Jones, a local farmer, found the bone. It is 41 inches in length and 35 inches in circumference at the joint.

The completion of local amateur geologists is that this animal must have been buried along the seacoast in prehistoric times. The bones, partly petrified, have lain there for perhaps millions of years. In the great subsidence which sank this portion of the continent at least 4,000 feet below the sea, the bones were buried by washing sands of ocean. Note testimony to the fact that this has been our lot in fact in the vast quantities of sea-gravel and sand brought to light by the flood.

As soon as communication is opened, the reporter of the state newspaper will be contacted in an effort to ascertain the exact character of the disaster. There is little hope of locating the rest of the skeleton, as it may have been scattered over a wide area of sea bed.



Victims of Eastern Colorado's greatest disaster. Left top, Wayne Genser, whose body, fully clothed, was found after three days 35 miles down stream. Top right, Mrs. Genser. Bottom, Clarence Lethian, in whose home the three perished.

TRAGEDY RECORDED—This issue of The Seibert Settler recorded the tragedy of the 1935 flood, which left death and destruction in its wake. But as a story at the lower right indicates, the terrible flood also unearthed prehistoric evidence of the time when eastern Colorado was on the sea shore.

(Copy courtesy of Twila Gorton)

During the homestead rush in Kit Carson County in 1906, a newspaper, the *Hoyt Free Press*, was started at the small community of Hoyt, about three or four miles north of present-day Seibert. The paper later was moved to Seibert, where it was known as the *Seibert Settler*, and later as the *Prairie Settler*.

In September, 1920, the paper was all but defunct when it was taken over by V.S. FitzPatrick, a man with five-years of newspaper experience with the *Steamboat Pilot*, the *Haxtun Harvest*, and a paper at Oak Creek behind him, and by his wife, Loretta, an experienced lawyer's secretary.

The last issue of the paper had been published 23 weeks before. But for the tolerance of the postmaster, Mrs. Mae Cates, the paper would have been declared dead and its second class mailing privilege cancelled. Even so, the new owners still had to change the dateline a week at a time, and print two copies for each of the 23 weeks so the files could be completed.

The newspaper press was an ancient "Washington Mankiller," so the FitzPatricks changed from a six-column to a four-column tabloid format so the paper could be printed on a 10"x 15" Gordon job press.

The paper was purchased from A.V. Jessee, president of the Seibert State Bank, and Clyde Tavenner, a wheat farmer who had been a Congressman in Illinois three times and who headed the movement to win independence for the Philippine Republic.

Tavenner helped the FitzPatricks win out with the *Settler*, too. Having been an apprentice printer in his youth, he now sat up nights, hand-setting type for the paper. But soon, the owners made arrangements with Will Borland at the *Flagler News* to set their type on his Linotype, until they had their own such machine in a couple of years.

Knowing that FitzPatrick was an experienced band leader, the community raised money through an auction of donated articles to equip a band he would form. The band became good, and for years dominated the musical scene all over that region.

Three local high school boys, Charles Conley, Lindley Cates and Vern Carpenter, were messing with "wireless (Please see next page.)

Our heritage...



V.S. FITZPATRICK

(Continued from last page.)

transmission." Mostly as a stunt, the *Seibert Settler* fostered their efforts, using news bulletins they received, and was the first newspaper in the United States to have a column of radio news. The paper also had 28 rural correspondents and three staff columnists.

Although the newspaper was doing well, domestic troubles came. Loretta first spent a summer in Wyoming, then after returning, soon left as secretary with the Guldman's, owners of Denver's "Golden Eagle" store, for Europe and the Holy Land.

Fitz continued the paper for a year, then leased it to Chase Day, and with his new Packard and Airedale dog, he headed for New York. From there, playing in the ship's band, he traveled to South Africa, and eventually trekked inland to the gold and diamond mines.

After returning to this country, he drove through Canada to South Dakota, then south to Denver, where he went to work for Denver Developers, selling city lots east of Colorado Boulevard on Eighth Avenue. Some lots which he sold for \$320 a pair later re-sold for \$12,000.

In early 1932, yielding to pleas of A.V. Jessee and Chris Snyder, new cashier of the Seibert bank, FitzPatrick returned to Seibert and took over the *Settler*.

The depression and dust bowl struck later that year, and the bank went broke in December. The *Seibert Settler* had \$700 on deposit, but owed the bank \$1,000. The *Settler* was going broke, too.

But then came a young man with a plan for a county directory. He had no money, but needed printing. The *Seibert Settler* did the job; the young man went out and collected for the advertising, and disappeared, owing \$420.

In a flash of inspiration, FitzPatrick decided the *Seibert Settler* would go into

the directory business. Starting with \$200 borrowed from Ella Jessee, now widow of A.V., and with an employee, Bonny Gaunt, as partner, The National Directory Company went on for eight years to cover more than 200 counties in Colorado, Wyoming, Kansas, Nebraska, Oklahoma and Missouri, with as many as 42 workers in the field and 19 in the printing plant, including many high school students who worked before and after school and on off-days to help keep food on the family tables.

During this period, FitzPatrick had figured prominently in organization of The Plainsmen's Association, with 7,000 members over seven states. The *Seibert Settler* was the official publication of this body. In a couple of years, the association resolved into state bodies and local organizations, still promoting the Charles T. Peacock damming-lister type of summer fallow which led into modern farming methods.

The *Seibert Settler* and National Directory Company saved thousands of dollars after FitzPatrick took a course in photo-engraving. He purchased equipment and trained employees to make the hundreds of "cuts" used in the business and making thousands for other printers.

Following the depression, the *Seibert Settler* changed to tri-weekly, and was booming. It seemed a good time to sell.

Judson W. Loveridge, claiming to be an experienced newspaperman, bought the paper. He immediately fired part of the trained employees, raised prices, and

tried to do work of which he was not capable. Going broke, he sued FitzPatrick for having made false claims in selling, but before long, he sent out exactly the same sales sheet that Fitz had used. The *Settler's* lawyer "put him up a tree," as he said. Loveridge paid up and got out.

The *Seibert Settler* was sold to T. Guard, owner of the *Flagler News*, who changed it to a full page in the *News* around 1940.

(Information for this article was provided by V.S. FitzPatrick, who will be 100 in January, 1986.)

The *Seibert Settler* coined a number of slogans, among them: "Voice of the Seibert country;" "If the Lord made a better place than the Seibert country, He kept it for Himself;" and "Ten cows, twenty sows and 200 hens on every Seibert farm."

In a few years, the latter slogan came true. Then the *Seibert Settler* got out a "poultry edition." Five thousand copies were bought by the Gold Bond Hatcheries of Burlington, and were distributed in nearby counties.

According to the Colorado Historical Society, the *Prairie Settler* published weekly from 1907 until April, 1942. However, there were other newspapers in Seibert, as well, including: The *Seibert Free Press*, 1887-1890; the *Seibert Boomerang*, 1911-1912; and the *Seibert Monitor*, 1913-1916.



NATIONAL DIRECTORY Company production crew, 1936, included, from left, Chink Perrine, Duane Oldson, V.S. FitzPatrick, Louise Simpson, Bonny Gaunt (later Gould), Leona Scheidegger and Lucille Knowland.

(Photo reprinted from "Back Trail," by V.S. FitzPatrick)